



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 17, 2015

**CONTACT: MAJ Lona Christensen**

**605-737-6540**

**NOMINEES FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S TOP EMPLOYER AWARD NAMED**

*Fifteen South Dakota Employers Recognized by National Guard and Reserve Members*

**RAPID CITY, S.D.** – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense (DoD) office, announces 15 South Dakota employers of Guard and Reserve employees have been nominated for the 2015 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award (commonly referred to as the “Freedom Award”).

The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the DoD to employers for their support of National Guard and Reserve members. On behalf of the Secretary of Defense, ESGR runs the annual award program, which has presented the honor to 205 employers since 1996.

Almost half of the U.S. military is made up of National Guard and Reserve members, many of whom also hold jobs with civilian employers. The Freedom Award recognizes those employers that provide the most outstanding support for these Citizen Warriors. Up to 15 employers will be selected for this year's award and honored at the Pentagon in an official ceremony in August.

Nominations for the Freedom Award must come from a Guard or Reserve member who is employed by the organization they are nominating, or from a family member. This year's nominees (complete list available at <http://www.freedomaward.mil/TemplateDetailsView.aspx?TemplateID=6406&ModuleID=7> ) represent large and small employers from almost every industry, including health, transportation, hospitality, entertainment, banking, service and security (just to name a few), as well as from state and local governments. ESGR received nominations for employers in all 50 states, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

Semifinalists and finalists will be announced in sequence throughout the coming months with the recipients being announced in late June. Updates, press releases and a complete list of the 2,960 nominees can be found at [www.freedomaward.mil](http://www.freedomaward.mil).

2015 Freedom Award Nominations from South Dakota:

South Dakota State University
Nygren's True Value
Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office
Landmark Aviation
Dakota Valley Community School District
True North Steel
SDN Communications
Sioux Falls Fire Rescue
Daktronics

Liberty Elementary School
Black Hills Corporation
Redfield Energy
eProvider Solutions
Crary Law Firm
South Dakota Highway Patrol

\*Denotes employer received more than one nomination

####